



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COWBOY BANDIT ADMITS IN FEDERAL COURT TO ROBBING EIGHT TEXAS BANKS

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 44-year-old Ernest Rodriguez, Jr., of San Antonio, Texas, a.k.a. the Cowboy Bandit, pled guilty to eight counts of bank robbery and one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

In pleading guilty before United States Magistrate Judge Andrew Austin, Rodriguez admitted that he stole a total of \$31,592 from five different Austin banks:

- 1) \$4,550 from the Bank of America at 3900 North IH-35 on February 21, 2004;
- 2) \$3,968 from the Bank of America at 9701 Research Boulevard on March 3, 2004;
- 3) \$11,660 from the Travis County Credit Union at 1101 IH-35 North on March 9, 2004;
- 4) \$2,550 from the Wells Fargo Bank at 3221 Red River Street on April 4, 2004;
- 5) \$8,864 from the Liberty Bank at 8770 Research Boulevard on April 5, 2004.

Furthermore, Rodriguez pled guilty, on a transfer of venue from the Northern and Southern Districts of Texas, to committing three other bank robberies, two in Dallas and one in Corpus Christi. Rodriguez admitted that on March 18, 2004, he robbed the Washington Mutual Bank (4101 Lomo Alto Drive, Dallas, TX) stealing \$420; on March 19, 2004, the Bank of America (2130 Fort Worth Avenue, Dallas, TX) stealing \$6,600; and, on March 30, 2004, the American Bank (711 Carancahua, Corpus Christi, TX) stealing \$1,650.

Rodriguez, a convicted felon, also admitted to possessing a Browning .380 semi-automatic pistol on March 24, 2004. His criminal history includes a 1994 conviction and eight-year sentence for theft and possession of heroin in Bexar County, Texas.

"The so-called 'Cowboy Bandit' got a big dose of reality today in Federal Court. In truth, Rodriguez is no cowboy, but an serial bank robber who will soon find out what happens to those who rob banks in Texas," said United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

On April 14, 2004, Rodriguez was arrested by Austin police detectives after leaving the Travis County Credit Union, where he was recognized by one of the bank tellers as the same man who robbed the bank a month earlier. He remains in custody pending sentencing.

Rodriguez faces up to 20 years imprisonment per bank robbery count and up to ten years imprisonment on the felon in possession charge.

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The Western District of Texas prosecution resulted from an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Austin Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, San Antonio Police Department and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Assistant United States Attorney Gerald C. Carruth is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

The prosecution of this case is another example of how the United States Attorney's Offices in Texas are implementing the Department of Justice's gun crime initiative - Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). Project Safe Neighborhoods is a nationwide federal initiative designed to reduce gun violence in our communities. PSN promotes partnerships among federal, state, and local law enforcement to target criminals in possession of guns. Federal law insures that when an armed criminal is arrested, that individual will face swift criminal prosecution and be exiled from the community through the use of stiff mandatory prison sentences.

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